

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 00650 301126Z

ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1520

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 0650

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, LE, EYWN US

SUBJECT: ASF DEPLOYMENT IN SOUTHERN LEBANON

REF: STATE 20946

1. SINCE FONMIN KHADDAM HAD STARTED HIS MORNING SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER OF QATAR, I ACCEPTED SUGGESTION OF KHADDAM'S PRIVATE SECRETARY TO SAVE TIME BY HAVING MY DEPUTY MAKE PRESENTATION TO HIM AND TO MINISTER'S TRANSLATOR/NOTE TAKER AT 1000 LOCAL. THEY WILL GET TEXT TO KHADDAM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND ADVISE WHEN HE HAS A REPLY.

2. FOLLOWING PRESENTATION WE ADDED FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS AS BEING ON PERSONAL BASIS FROM ME TO KHADDAM:

QTE A) I RECALL WHEN WE DISCUSSED THE SITUATION OF SOUTHERN LEBANON IN EARLY DECEMBER YOU WERE OPTIMISTIC THAT ENOUGH UNITS OF THE LEBANESE ARMY TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SECURITY IN SOUTH COULD BE ORGANIZED IN RELATIVELY SHORT TIME. IT NOW SEEMS THAT THE ORGANIZATION OF SUCH LEBANESE UNITS HAS BEEN GREATLY DELAYED. I WONDER WHETHER YOU HAVE ANY INSIGHTS INTO THE REASONS FOR THIS DELAY. COULD YOU NOW ESTIMATE WHEN SUCH A FORCE MIGHT BE ORGANIZED? COULD SYRIA HELP IN ANY WAY TO SPEED UP THE PROCESS? SECONDLY, COULD

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GREATER USE BE MADE OF LEBANESE GENDARMERIE IN SOUTH VICE THE LEBANESE ARMY SINCE FORMER'S REORGANIZATION SEEMS FURTHER ADVANCED THAN THE ARMY'S AT THIS POINT. IF NEITHER OF THESE HOLDS PROMISE OF SUCCESS, IS IT NOT TIME TO CONSIDER USING NON-SYRIAN ASF UNITS VICE SYRIANS IN NABATIYAH AREA?

QTE B) THE SITUATION AROUND NABATIYAH REMAINS SOMEWHAT

AMBIGUOUS TO US AND WE HAVE NO DIRECT SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON IT. COULD YOU PROVIDE US WITH ANY DETAILS OR CLARIFICATIONS AS SEEN BY SARG TO PASS ON TO THE SECRETARY, INCLUDING DETAILS REGARDING THE REASONS FOR THIS DEPLOYMENT?

QTE C) AN UNIDENTIFIED SYRIAN SPOKESMAN (ACCORDING ISRAELI RADIO) YESTERDAY TERMED IT "LUDICROUS" THAT THIS ASF DEPLOYMENT COULD CONSTITUTE ANY DIRECT THREAT TO ISRAEL. HOWEVER MUCH WE CAN
A
DERSTAND THIS VIEW, IT IS A FACT THAT THE ISRAELIS HAVE DEVELOPED A SERIOUS STATE OF CONCERN OVER THIS PROSPECT AND I THINK DAMASCUS AGREES WITH USG THAT ANY INCIDENT AT THIS TIME WOULD BE VERY UNFORTUNATE. UNQTE.

3. COMMENT: AMONG OTHER PRESSURES ON DAMASCUS RE ASF DEPLOYMENT IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, I NOTE TAUNTS FROM RADIO BAGHDAD THAT SARG HAS ASSURED ISRAEL THROUGH USG THAT IT WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH ISRAELI ATTACKS ON PALESTINIANS AND LEBANESE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT IN SOUTHERN AREA.

4. I FIND DATT TEL AVIV REPORT GIVING IDF CLARIFICATION OF MILITARY SITUATION IN NABATIYAH AS OF LATE YESTERDAZ ADTERNOON REASSURING (IR 6 849 0040 77). THIS PLUS USG'S CONTINUED URGING RESTRAINT SHOULD HELP KEEP LID ON. IN MEETING WITH KHEDDAM, DCM WILLREITERATGRAVITY OF SITUATION AS PERCEIVED BY ISRAELIS.
MURPHY

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NNN

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